

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00
EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 MCT-01
OC-06 CCO-00 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 /105 W
-----025685 261342Z /43

O 261115Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9704
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMSIXFLT
EUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0601

BRUSSELS AND PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PGOV, OS
SUBJ: GTPTY
IN TUNISIA--SITREP ONE

REF: (A) TUNIS 592 (B) TUNIS 587

1. FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE IN FIRST
HOURS OF UGTT GENERAL STRIKE TILL 1030 HOURS LOCAL 26 JAN.

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2. STRIKE WAS DUE TO BEGIN AT MIDNIGHT JAN 25, BUT BY
1700 DISTURBANCES WERE TAKING PLACE IN AREA BETWEEN
MEDINA (OLD CITY) AND AVENUE DE LA LIBERTE ON WHICH
EMBASSY LOCATED. IN COURSE OF EVENING, BEFORE BEING
DISPERSED BY BRIGADE D'ORDRE PUBLIQUE (BOP), CROWD
HAD DONE EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO MONOPRIX DEPARTMENT STORE,
BANK AND REPORTEDLY RADIO/TELEVISION AND POST OFFICE.

3. ON 3130 TELEVISION NEWS, GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT PUBLIC UTILITY WORKERS WHO STRUCK WOULD BE SUBJECT TO PROVISIONS OF PENAL CODE AND FOLLOWED THIS WITH EXHORTATIONS FROM VARIOUS OFFICIALS TO WORKERS NOT TO OBEY STRIKE CALL.

4. SUBURBAN RAILWAY BEGAN OPERATING THIS MORNING ON SCHEDULE, BUT ONLY 10 PERCENT OF BUSES WERE IN OPERATION AT RUSH HOUR. THESE, HOWEVER, BEING SUPPLEMENTED BY ARMY BUSES AND TRUCKS. KEY PUBLIC BUILDINGS UNDER ARMY GUARD, AND IT APPEARS THAT ARMY MAY ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SO FAR NORMAL OPERATION OF ELECTRICITY, TELEPHONES, AND RADIO. APPROXIMATELY HALF OF SHOPS BETWEEN EMBASSY AND SUBURBS WERE OPEN THIS MORNING AND AT LEAST SOME CONSTRUCTION WORKERS WERE ON JOB. VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AT PERHAPS 40 PERCENT OF NORMAL LEVEL.

5. SO FAR UGTT STRIKE BY NO MEANS 100 PERCENT EFFECTIVE, AND IO HAS HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON AVERAGE TUNISIAN OTHER THAN COMMUTERS. ATTENTION NOW CENTERED ON AREA AROUND MEDINA, WHICH HAS BEEN SCENE OF TROUBLE FOR TWO PREVIOUS NIGHTS. AT 0800 ABOUT 100 YOUTHS CONFRONTED BY BOP AT PORT DE FRANCE. WORKER DEMONSTRATION REPORTED IN ANOTHER MEDINA AREA AND DISTURBANCES NEAR LYCEE CARNOT (ALL SCHOOLS, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY, OUT ON WINTER HOLIDAYS).
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6. AT ABOUT 1000 TUNISIAN ARMY UNIT OF ABOUT 100 MEN IN BATTLE DRESS MOVED INTO PORT DE FRANCE AND BEGAN PICKING UP YOUTHS WHO HAD BEEN HURLING STONES. WE ARE MONITORING RADIO AND IT APPEARS PRINCIPAL REASON FOR MOVING ARMY UNIT TO THIS AREA IS THE MOB OF ABOUT 500 NOW MOVING THROUGH THE SOUKS TOWARD THAT POINT.

7. COMMENT: SO FAR STRIKE CANNOT BE CALLED GREAT SUCCESS. WE HAVE ONLY FRAGMENTARY REPORTS ON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MAJOR URBAN CENTERS OUTSIDE OF TUNIS. WE ARE PROBABLY ENTERING CRITICAL PERIOD IN REGARD TO SO FAR RELATIVELY SMALL DISTURBANCES. IF STRIKE IS NOT PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE, FRUSTRATED WORKERS AND UNEMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE AND STUDENTS COULD JOIN FORCES. THIS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY TAKE PLACE IN AND AROUND THE MEDINA WHERE IT IS DIFFICULT FOR SECURITY FORCES TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY. GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES, WHICH SEEM TO HAVE SITUATION UNDER FAIRLY GOOD CONTROL, MAY HAVE THEIR WORK CUT OUT FOR THEM TONIGHT.
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